Do governments have a core set of geographic tasks?

Dr Robert Barr OBE
Manchester Geomatics, Warrington Borough Council,
School of Environment and Development
The University of Manchester
Christopher Roper – Landmark Information Group

4th INSPIRE Conference
Krakow 22 – 25 June 2010
The Ten Reinventing Government Principles

April 6th 2010

Dear Chief Secretary,

I’m afraid there is no money left

Kind regards
Liam
Modernising Government

“Joined-up government in action – including a clear commitment for people to be able to notify different parts of government of details such as a change of address simply and electronically in one transaction.”

Modernising Government White Paper
Thursday 21 January 2010

One-stop shop for Government data launched

A major new website has been launched to provide the public with a free, one-stop shop for Government data.

The site, data.gov.uk contains more than 2,500 sets of data on topics such as crime, education and health. The data can also be used to create applications, and already has a number available, including the ‘School Finder’ to help parents locate their nearest schools.

Visit the data.gov.uk website

Digital Britain Minister Stephen Timms, World Wide Web inventor Sir Tim Berners-Lee and Professor Nigel Shadbolt from the University of Southampton worked together to launch the website.
Place matters: the Location Strategy for the United Kingdom

November 2008

ONE SCOTLAND – ONE GEOGRAPHY
A GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION STRATEGY FOR SCOTLAND
4.1 Vision

Trusted geospatial information that is available, accessible, able to be shared and used to support the:

- safety and security of New Zealand;
- growth of an inclusive, innovative economy; and
- preservation and enhancement of our society, culture and environment.

To achieve this vision, government needs to lead the development of appropriate ongoing interventions and incentives for consistent creation, exchange and maintenance of geospatial information.

4.2 Purpose

This Strategy provides the principles, goals and governance structure required to achieve the vision. It aims to:

- define the approach needed to ensure New Zealand’s geospatial information infrastructure meets the ongoing business needs of government
- provide the framework for the leadership and direction needed for managing geospatial information
- optimise the collective benefit from public investment in geospatial infrastructure
- ensure quality fundamental (i.e. priority) geospatial data is available to all.

4.3 Key principles

The key principles that have been identified to guide decision-making for achieving the vision are:

- Geospatial information is collected once to agreed standards to enable use by many.
- Discovery and access of geospatial information is easy.
- Within the appropriate context, geospatial information is easy to understand, integrate, interpret, and use.
- Geospatial information that government needs is readily available, and its use is not unduly restricted.
- Geospatial content is appropriately preserved and protected.
Core Reference Geography

“Commonly used geographic datasets that provide a framework for linking and integrating other geo-referenced information as well as providing key contextual information”.

Robin McLaren 25 September 2006
and
Place Matters: the Location Strategy for the United Kingdom
Authoritative Information

• Boundaries
  Administrative, statistical, political

• Property Parcels
  – Boundary
  – Ownership

• Addresses
  – Streets
  – BLPUs
  – UPRNs
Volunteered information

- Open Street Map
- Vehicle tracks
- Property registration
- GPS enabled personal location
  - Most current smartphones
Principles

• Benefit the public
• Collect once use many times
• Sustainable funding
• Light weight governance
Benefit the public

In a time of austerity it may not be enough to show that any government activity has persisted over time, or that there are agencies devoted to it.

It will become essential to demonstrate that the public benefit is commensurate with its cost.
Benefit the public

The INSPIRE directive was drafted in a period of much freer government spending across Europe.
In many countries INSPIRE compliance is likely to be severely constrained by budgets.
To ensure that at least a subset of INSPIRE aspirations are met we must identify the minimum that provides the largest benefit.
Collect once use many times

• Government information policy should limit itself to data sets that need to be definitive
• These are natural monopolies
• Duplication in the public sector is wasteful and implies the duplication of government activities
• Duplication in the private sector may be economically beneficial while against the public interest
Sustainable funding

• From general taxation
  – Geographic information is an easy budget line to cut

• From transactional fees
  – Those that change the data pay, but when transactions fall may not be sustainable

• From data sales and licences
  – Limit data usage, potentially unfair pricing
Light weight governance

• An independent commission should oversee any government *location strategy*

• It should be the arbiter of:
  – Public interest
  – Data selection
  – Sustainable funding
  – Act as a geo-information regulator
The three ‘R’s of government geographic information policy

• Registration
• Resilience
• Regulation
Registration

Governments maintain three classes of registers:

– People
  • Births, Deaths, Marriages, Arrivals, Departures, Addresses, Permissions (e.g. Driving License)

– Organisations
  • Companies, Voluntary organisations, Government Agencies, Establishments (e.g. hospitals, schools)

– Places
  • Cadasters, addresses, protected environments, administrative statistical and political boundaries
Resilience

• Military use
  – e.g. Origin of the Great Britain National Mapping Agency

• Civil emergencies
  – Floods, earthquakes, terrorism

• Uniformed emergency services
  – Police, Fire Ambulance Coastguard
Regulation

• Administrative
  – Maintenance of registers

• Economic
  – Control of monopolies
  – Maximising national economic effectiveness

• Consumer protection
  – Fair trading – competition laws
  – Trading standards – data quality
Location Strategy

“Currently, too few government-owned datasets that incorporate location can be easily assembled and analysed with reliability from across local and central government bodies. There remains too much duplication, too little reuse, and too few linkages across datasets which are required to support policy implementation in, for example, planning, housing, flooding, social exclusion and traffic management.”
The Ten Reinventing Government Principles

Conclusions

• The new economic environment will force governments to do more with less
• Geographic information will be an important enabler in such an environment
• It will promote greater transparency and accountability in government
• It can encourage desirable economic growth through data re-use
That’s it!

Dr Robert Barr OBE
robert.barr@manchester.ac.uk